

III. Court Outreach to the Media

A. Programs

- Ideas for Media Outreach
- Press Releases and Media Coverage
- How to Create a Media Contact List
- Tips for Working With the Media

Ideas for Media Outreach

The news media are important means for educating the public and increasing their awareness of the issues around adoption and permanency. Most people get their information from the news—whether it be traditional means such as print, radio, or television ads, or increasingly through online sources—so developing strategies to use the media to influence public opinion is a critical part of any public awareness effort.

There are many opportunities to involve the media with Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Involving the local media is a useful and cost-effective way of shedding light on the obstacles within the foster care system, while at the same time illuminating the successes of the juvenile courts and other collaborators in dealing with these examples.

Print Media

Be sure to alert all area print media to any events you plan for the month, including Adoption Saturday, the signing of a resolution, and any other court or community events you have planned. Ideas for working with local print media include:

- **Op-ed article:** Write an op-ed article to be signed by a judge that highlights Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Submit it to the local paper's op-ed editor with a cover note explaining why the paper should publish it. Be sure to mention that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month. An example of an op-ed article written by the Presiding Judge of Inyo Superior Court, Dean T. Stout, which was published in the *Inyo County Register*, follows in the resources section.
- **Opinion article/commentary:** Most newspapers also have space in their editorial section for longer opinion articles or commentaries. Write a letter to the editor explaining the importance of the need for children to find permanence, and a sample of your article. Provide all of your contact information and ask when it would be convenient to contact information and be sure to note that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month.
- **Letter to the editor/meeting with editorial board:** Write letters to newspapers with a widespread readership and also to local community newspapers. Another idea is to send a letter to the local newspaper's editorial board editor to arrange a meeting between a judge, a family that went through the adoption process, the head of a local agency, or anyone else who might make sense in your locality, and your local newspaper's editorial board. At the meeting, ask the editorial board to write an editorial stressing the importance of adoption and permanency. Bring fact sheets on foster children, adoption, and other child welfare issues.
- **Open your court to newspapers:** Invite the newspaper reporters to attend your adoption calendar so that they can see and report on the good work your court is doing. Be sure to get the permission of the parents and the children before inviting the media.

- **Develop a court newsletter** or work with other community agencies and partners that often have their own newsletters. Advertising earlier in the fall can encourage volunteers to help with events, and afterward makes a great story to promote further events and planning throughout the year. A sample from Santa Clara County Post-Adoption Services is included in the resources section.
- **A weekly profile during the month:** of a child waiting for adoption or a feel-good story about a successful adoption or reunification with birth parents.
- **A hard news story:** on the adoption process and the court's role in expediting adoptions.
- **A feature story:** highlighting a local adoption program or other programs that help teens or special needs children in foster care.
- **A "Did you know"** feature with facts about adoption.
- **A "day in the life"** type story in which the reporter spends a day with a juvenile judge dealing with adoption and permanency issues, and then writes a story about it.
- **Send a letter to a columnist** for your local newspaper who covers community issues, asking him or her to write a column on adoption. Be sure to note that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month, and use local facts to illustrate the scope of the problem.

Radio and Television Media

Similar to print media, alerting local radio and television media can be a positive way to reach out to the public, with the added benefit of adding voices and faces to the story. Some ideas include:

- **Develop a televised forum on adoption:** Many local cable television stations have scheduled time for community programming, as well as the necessary equipment and technological expertise to help you get started. A broadcast forum is a good way to spread the message about the need for adoptive parents and foster parents. This type of program can bring together people with different perspectives on adoption and can speak to many different audiences. Cable stations also will often rerun the program several times, increasing its reach.
- **Arrange a meeting with the news director** of one of your local television stations or radio news stations. Suggest a weekly feature for the evening newscast that features kids who need to be adopted.
- **Arrange for interviews of a judge** on local radio and television news programs, to address the issues around adoption and permanency. Call the news director at a local radio station, tell him or her that November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month, and suggest a news segment on the issue.

- **Develop a 30-second public service announcement (PSA)** about the need for continued commitment to adoption and permanency. Submit the PSA to local radio stations with a letter explaining the need for increased public awareness of adoption and permanency issues.

Other Ideas for Media Outreach

- **Reach out to your community:** There are many ways to reach the public with messages about Court Adoption and Permanency Month. Posting information about the month on your court's Web site, writing a newsletter article for a church newsletter, a court newsletter, or any other community newsletter, or asking your judge make speeches at community meetings can all increase awareness during the month of November or during other times of the year. A small budget can also go a long way towards spreading the message through an ad campaign or other means.
- **Heart galleries:** These projects receive much positive media attention and result in finding permanent homes for many children. Sacramento County, for example, has received much positive publicity for their project. See the materials in the Court Outreach to the Public section for more information. Handouts from several of the current projects also provide many tips and advice for working with the media.
- **Develop new technologies:** be sure to watch for any opportunities that this may provide to "get the word out" about adoption and permanency issues.
- **Open your courthouse to educate the public:** Invite the media to an event similar to a school's "open house." This program includes judges, attorneys, social workers, CASAs, clerks, and all others involved in the adoption process.
- **Adoption excellence awards:** These honor those states, agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals that have demonstrated excellence in providing stable, permanent homes for our nation's children in foster care. Each year the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families accepts nominations for those that demonstrate this commitment to rebuild the lives of the 518,000 children in foster care around the country and to achieve permanency for the 118,000 who are waiting for adoption. Several California individuals and agencies have been nominated and awarded these prestigious awards. The local county newsletter included the following resources honors one such individual in Santa Clara County.

Press Releases and Media Coverage

The news media—television, radio, and both daily and community newspapers—can be a powerful means of spreading the good-news message of Adoption Saturday to the rest of the community. Many counties use press releases, video releases, or other contacts to invite the media to cover their events on this special day. For example, Sacramento County, Ventura County, and many others have worked with local media through press releases. Both local and national media also cover Adoption Saturday events. CNN has covered Alameda County's Adoption Saturday in the past.

This year Ventura County and San Diego County will be covered by local media, as will other counties around the state. Several examples of press releases from recent years follow.

How to Create a Media Contact List

If you do not already have an updated media list for your area, spend some time in September and October developing one. Use the yellow pages or the Internet to compile a list of reporters and media outlets that might be interested in covering any events you may hold. Or call your reference librarian, who may have a media list compiled.

Be sure to include the news directors at local news radio stations and television stations and the reporters at local newspapers (include daily, weekly, ethnic, alternative, and community newspapers on your list) who cover children's issues and court issues.

For each entry, include the name, title, media outlet, address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address.

It is also a good idea to keep an open file to add notes throughout the year when you have any ideas for next November, or that can be used any time of the year. Another option is to use the "notes" feature in most e-mail and electronic calendar programs.

Tips for Working With the Media

- **Give advance notice.**
 - Give any media outlet plenty of notice in writing about an upcoming event.
 - Always follow up with a phone call.
- **Repeat yourself.**
 - Use consistent and easy-to-understand language in all media materials.
 - When giving an interview, repeat your main messages two or three times so that the listener will walk away from the interview remembering your main messages.
- **Remember your audience.**
 - The media is merely a portal to your main audiences: the public and opinion-makers. When giving an interview, be sure to use messages that will resonate with those audiences, not just the reporter.
- **Be aware of privacy issues.**
 - Give the media clear guidelines about their access to the courtroom. Los Angeles County developed the following media coverage conditions:
 1. Media are permitted to have cameras in designated areas of the courthouse hallways to obtain footage and conduct interviews of consenting adopting families.
 2. Families who do not wish to participate in interviews, be on camera, or have their photographs taken will be encouraged to wait in an area of the hallway where cameras are not present.
 3. Media are instructed to refrain from photographing, filming, or interviewing any adopting families who have not given their consent to be photographed, filmed, or interviewed.
 4. Media are instructed to refrain from taking sweeping shots of the hallway area where nonconsenting families are gathered.
 5. Designated media areas will be clearly identified with signs.
 6. The waiting area for families who do not wish to be photographed, filmed, or interviewed will be clearly identified by signs.
 7. Prepare families and children thoroughly for each interview.
- **The North American Council on Adoptable Children provides the following advice:**
 - Once you have chosen a family, let them know more about the interview, and give them an opportunity to consider the potential benefits and risks before agreeing. On the positive side, interviews can highlight family strengths, influence policymakers' perceptions, and provide information or inspiration to other families in similar situations.

- Families should also consider these points before agreeing to participate in an interview:
 1. Children may be teased by schoolmates and friends who see the interview.
 2. Parents should consider how their co-workers or their children's teachers might react to hearing about the family's personal history.
 3. When a family goes public, the public may respond. The family may get unwelcome phone calls or visits from strangers.
 4. Most newspapers and television shows do not let interviewees review or make changes to an edited story before it goes to press or is broadcast. As a result, interview participants take the risk of being misquoted or having their view misrepresented. Retractions and corrections can be printed and aired, but they may not reach everyone who saw the original story.
- After a family agrees to the interview, and before they talk to the reporter, thoroughly prepare each family member for the event:
 1. Share everything you know about the interview, the reporter, and the story.
 2. Let the family read or view similar stories that the reporter or the station has covered recently.
 3. Give the family some idea of the reporter's possible line of inquiry. Suggest likely questions, and have the family practice responding.
 4. If at all possible, be present during the interview, and supportive.
 5. Remind the family that they cannot control what the reporter chooses to include in the story. The family does, however, have the right to disclose only as much as they choose, and to share only that which they do not mind seeing in print, hearing on the radio, or watching on television.
- **Remember there is no such thing as “off the record.”**
- **Be helpful.**
 - Reporters will look to you as the expert. Be prepared to provide the reporter with accurate and current facts about adoption and permanency.
 - Reporters are often working under a deadline. Be available for reporters and be sure to call them back in a timely manner.

B. Resources

- Santa Clara County Post-Adoption Services Newsletter
- Sacramento County News: Heart Gallery of Sacramento Exhibit on Display at County Administration Building
- Inyo County Register: November is Court Adoption and Permanency Month (Op-Ed Article by Supervising Superior Court Judge Dean Stout)
- Court Press Releases:
 - Alameda County 2004
 - Los Angeles County 2005
 - Sacramento County 2005
 - Ventura County 2005
- Juvenile Court Administrative Deskbook: Media Relations Plan for the Juvenile Court
- Trust and Confidence in the California Courts 2005: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys: Introduction and Executive Survey

Santa Clara County Post-Adoption Services

The Gazette

November 2003
Volume 1, Issue IV

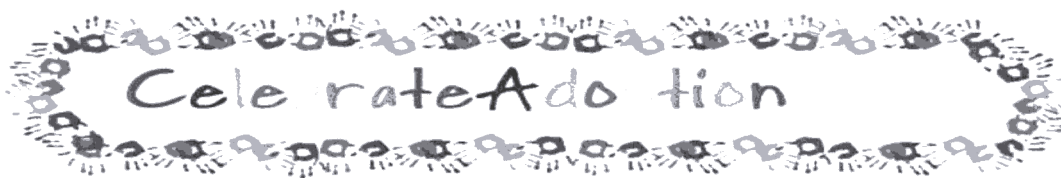
History of National Adoption Month

National Adoption Month has been observed throughout the United States for more than a decade. Its roots can be traced back more than 25 years. In 1976, the governor of Massachusetts first proclaimed Adoption Week and, later that year, President Gerald Ford made it official. It eventually became a tradition to celebrate Adoption Week in November. As awareness and participation grew, so did the number of states proclaiming the observance.



National Adoption Week became National Adoption Month in 1990. Today, National Adoption Month is celebrated during the month of November throughout the United States. Its purpose is to provide national awareness, celebrate children and families, and call the nation to action to ensure safety, permanency and well-being for all of our children.

This article was taken from the Adopt Us Kids National Adoption Month November 2003 Campaign Marketing Kit. For more information refer to their website at www.adoptuskids.org



Congratulations!

To all 300 children who found families that opened their hearts and homes during the past year.

Special points of interest:

- *History of National Adoption Month*
- *Congratulations on National Adoption Award*
- *Camp PAKK*
- *Dear Joan*

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Congratulations! Adoption Bureau Manager Receives a National Adoption Award!

Congratulations to our Social Services Program Manager III, Frances Lewis Johnese. She was selected to receive an Adoption Excellence Award in the category of Individual Contributions. She is being recognized for extraordinary contributions she has made in providing adoption and other permanency outcomes for children in foster care.



The United States Department of Health and Human Services established the Adoption Excellence Awards program in 1997 to recognize outstanding accomplishments in achieving permanency for America's children waiting in foster care. These awards honor States, child welfare agencies, organizations, courts, businesses, individuals and families.

This year, the Adoption Excellence Awards will be presented to 30 recipients during the National Adoption Recruitment Summit at a ceremony held November 6, 2003 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington D.C. At the ceremony, Mrs. Johnese will be presented with a beautiful engraved award.

Camp PAKK (Parents Adopting Kids Kamp)

Adoption Social Worker Carole Klassen contributed to this article.

Camp PAKK was held this past August 8th-10th at Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, CA. The campus is situated on many beautiful acres of plush land on the Monterey Peninsula. The word "camp" is hardly a word which describes the experience had by those who attended. In total, 18 families and 48 children were in attendance. The weather was wonderful and perfect for camping. The accommodations consisted of private and semi-private dormitories, with bathroom and shower facilities available. Meals and snacks were provided and are always a hit at Camp PAKK, because meals are served in a bright and cheery cafeteria, consisting of a delicious menu that catered to vegetarians and meat-eaters alike.



Aside from the wonderful accommodations, great food and lush landscape, Camp PAKK offered an educational and enlightening experience. Camp PAKK is a special time for families and the people important to the adopted child and family, to come together to increase their family communication skills and enhance closeness. These goals are accomplished through a variety of activities. The parents had an opportunity to attend sessions that covered a range of topics. The topics included: discipline issues and dealing with anger, parenting through adoption, and what it is like growing up adopted. Let us not forget the children campers who also spent the day with their peers in a group setting. The children learned about identity building, how to answer tough adoptions questions from friends, family and those in the community, as well as participating in fun and self-esteem building activities. When the families were brought together with the staff, the activities for all consisted of games, art projects, nature walks, dance and sports, closing circles and songs, and adoption celebration.

Here are some of the responses and comments received by our adoptive families who attended Camp PAKK:

- ♥ "Wise-Up training made us (parents) see the importance of helping our daughter deal with adoptions questions out in the world."
- ♥ "It was beneficial to meet exceptional youth who were foster and adopted children that also worked at the camp"
- ♥ "Listening to other parent's experiences has helped us to understand and process our own experience"
- ♥ "I met another family who lives nearby that I plan to continue to meet/talk with"
- ♥ "We better appreciate the different temperaments of our children"
- ♥ "We better understand R.A.D." (Reactive Attachment Disorder)
- ♥ "We learned techniques to discipline children with R.A.D."
- ♥ "I learned that it is us parents that need to adjust to our kids"
- ♥ "The camp has really helped to keep our family together"
- ♥ "This might have been the "saving" of our marriage"
- ♥ "Best thing for our family– even better than Disneyland"
- ♥ "Camp PAKK helped our biological son understand adoption"



Save the Date!

Next year, Camp PAKK will be held on August 6th to 8th, 2004.

Who may attend: Any family who has adopted or will be adopting children placed through Santa Clara County Adoptions program is welcome to attend. Children ages 5 and above are welcome. There are no provisions for children under five to attend the camp.



Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, CA

Dear Joan:



If you have AAP or Post-Adoption Services questions for Dear Joan, please send them to:



Santa Clara County
Post-Adoption Services News-
letter
333 W. Julian Street
San Jose, CA 95110
Or

Post Adoption email address:
pasaba@cws.co.santa-clara.us

Visit our website at:
www.santaclaraadoption.org

Post-Adoption Services Staff:

Main Number:
(408) 975-5119

Irene Peoples, MSW
Lori Manning, MSW
Sharon Cruz, MSW
Carol Aldridge, Intake

Dear Joan,

My child is NOT graduating from high school on time. May I extend the AAP benefit beyond his 18th birthday, since he is not graduating?

- You may only extend the benefit if your child has a documented mental or physical disability from a licensed professional. You must notify our agency and submit this document to the agency 60 days prior to your child's 18th birthday, along with new AAP forms.

Dear Joan,

I'm planning to relocate. Whom should I contact with an address change?

- You can provide address changes to the Post Adoption Social Worker at 408-975-5119.

Dear Joan,

It is inconvenient for me to cash the AAP checks every month due to my handicap. Is direct deposit available?

- Yes, you can request a direct deposit form from your eligibility worker, who is listed on the upper right corner of your Notice of Action. If you do not know who your eligibility worker is, you can request to have him/her identified by calling 408-975-5760.

Dear Joan,

At what age(s) is my child eligible for an age-related increase?

You may contact the agency for an age-related increase when your child reaches the following ages: 5,9,12, and 15 years of age. You must notify our agency of this increase by telephone or in writing. Information about the age related increase is contained in Section one of the Adoption Assistance Agreement.

Dear Joan,

When I move out of the state of California, whom do I contact to change Medi-Cal over to Medicaid?

- You must notify your eligibility worker with Santa Clara County who will provide you with the instructions on who to contact in the new state of residence to initiate the process.

If you have any questions, be sure to contact us at 408-975-5119 or e-mail us at pasaba@cws.co.santa-clara.ca.us



Heart Gallery of Sacramento exhibit on display at County Administration Building

The first Heart Gallery of Sacramento exhibit, currently on display in the County Administration Building at 700 H St., has been extended through March 31. The exhibit, located in the Board of Supervisors Chambers, lobby, and on the second and seventh floors, features photos of Sacramento County foster children ages 2 to 15 in need of adoptive homes. The breathtaking photos were taken by community volunteers and highlight each child's unique personality.

The Heart Gallery of Sacramento is collaboration between Sacramento County Child Protective Services, California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), Sierra Adoption Services, Lilliput Children's Services, and CASA of Sacramento. The first Heart Gallery of Sacramento exhibit took place at CSUS in November and was featured in the [Sacramento Bee](#).

Tune in to KVIE Public Television's ViewFinder at 7 p.m. on March 8 to see a special segment on the Heart Gallery (videotaped in the County Administration Building), featuring Rosemary Papa, an adoptive parent and professor and director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at CSUS, who led this project.

For more information or to find out how you can help, call 875-5543 (875-5KID) or go to DHHS' [foster care](#) and [adoption](#) websites. Visit the [Countywide Services Agency](#) website to see the Heart Gallery of Sacramento photographs.



Tuesday, November 4th, 2003

Nov. is Court Adoption and Permanency Month

By Dean T. Stout

As a Superior Court judge, I look forward to presiding over adoption proceedings. Adoption cases are one of the few types of matters coming before the court which evoke joy and celebration on the part of everyone in the courtroom.

During adoption hearings, the use of cameras in the courtroom is not only allowed but encouraged. Adoption hearings are so important that they are given priority and special settings on the court's calendar.

Finalizing an adoption is a very special moment for the family. The occasion is intensely personal. The court strives to conduct adoption proceedings in a dignified manner, so to emphasize and respect the importance of the new legal relationship, yet casual enough to allow for the expression of emotions that are often overwhelming. The joyous courtroom experience is not possible however, without the commitment of adoptive parents.

To the end of providing needed permanency for children, the court recognizes the need and importance of recruiting suitable adoptive parents. The need for adoptive parents is especially critical for children who are older; siblings who want to be adopted together, children from minority cultures; and, children who are physically or mentally challenged.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption estimates that there are more than 100,000 children in the public child welfare system who are waiting for homes and families. More than 105,000 children in California are living apart from their families in out-of-home care. Recent Adoption and Foster Care statistics reflect that 25 percent of California's children in foster care had spent five or more years in foster homes. Many times children are frequently moved from one foster home or placement to another. Recognizing the need for permanency, the California Judicial Council and California Legislature have declared November to be Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

From time to time, we have cases here in Inyo County where parental rights have been terminated due to proven abuse or neglect, and notwithstanding extraordinary efforts and services, reunification has not been possible. These children then require a stable and permanent home which can provide them the love and care they desperately need and deserve.

By agreement, adoption services in Inyo County are provided by Kern County Department of Human Services-Adoptions in Bakersfield. Should you be interested in exploring the possibility of becoming an adoptive parent, please telephone Mr. Jon Roberson at Kern County Adoptions at (661)868-8933 or (661)868-8900. Mr. Roberson visits Inyo County on a regular basis.

Inyo County Child Protective Services makes available for viewing or loans out a 13-minute video for prospective adoptive parents. To borrow the video or obtain more information on becoming an adoptive parent or foster care provider, please contact Ms. Cathy Rose at Inyo County Child Protective Services by calling (760)872-1727.

Thank you for your consideration.

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The Superior Court of California
County of Inyo
168 North Edwards
Independence, CA 93526
Tel 760-878-0218
Fax 760-878-0433
301 West Line Street
Bishop, CA 93514
Tel 760-872-4971
Fax 760-872-1067
www.inyocourt.ca.gov



Superior Court of California
County of Alameda

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 10, 2004

COURTS DESIGNATE “ADOPTION DAY” TO EXPEDITE ADOPTIONS

- WHO:** 60 adoptive children of all ages and their prospective adoptive parents, Alameda County Judges and Commissioners, Social Workers, and court personnel.
- WHAT:** “Adoption Day” – Saturday, November 20, 2004. – Adoptions for 60 foster children and their prospective parents will be finalized. Judges, Commissioners, social workers, and court personnel will work on Saturday to expedite the hearings. The fifth annual “Adoption Day” is a collaboration between the Alameda County Department of Social Services Adoptions Program and the Juvenile Court of Alameda County.
- WHEN:** Saturday, November 20, 2004
9:00 a.m. - Opening Remarks and Presentations
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 pm - Adoption Finalizations
- WHERE:** Wiley W. Manuel Courthouse
661 Washington Street
Oakland, CA 94607
- CONTACT:** Sylvia A. Myles; Communications and Media Relations Officer,
Social Services Agency (510) 267-9434

In recognition of the event, Philanthropic Ventures, Waldron Consulting, Target Stores and Fiesta Toys will provide gifts for all adoptees and siblings. Staff from MOCHA (Museum of Children’s Art) will also be on hand to provide entertainment for the children and their families. The Probation Department and Social Services will provide refreshments. Reporters are welcome to talk to consenting families about their adoption experiences.



DAVID SANDERS, PH.D.
Director

County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 11, 2005

Contact: Louise Grasmehr or Stu Riskin
DCFS Office of Public Affairs
(213) 351-5886

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District
YVONNE B. BURKE
Second District
ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District
DON KNABE
Fourth District
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Fifth District

PRESS RELEASE

Los Angeles County Celebrates National Adoption Month in November *Variety of Events Seek to Increase Awareness and Recruit Families for Hundreds of Children*

To raise awareness about the hundreds of children under the supervision of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) who are awaiting adoptive homes, DCFS will hold a series of events aimed at celebrating adoptions and recruiting more adoptive families. The events will be held throughout November as part of Los Angeles County's celebration of National Adoption Month. Many of the children awaiting adoption are older youth and sibling groups. Some have special medical or developmental needs.

"There are more than 22,000 children in our County's foster care system. Hundreds are in need of adoption – especially our older children who may be emancipated without the love, security and support of a family," said Fifth District Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich. "Every child deserves a loving and safe home. Adopting a child creates a family – and a future."

"The need for permanent families for these children is great," added DCFS Director Dr. David Sanders. "We hope this month of special activities will highlight these wonderful children and encourage the community to consider adoption."

As part of a public awareness campaign, DCFS has created a special poster highlighting the need for families and dispelling common myths of who can adopt. The department will distribute the poster to business and community organizations throughout the County in November. The public awareness campaign will also include a bumper sticker campaign, sponsored by Supervisor Antonovich. Five-thousand bumper stickers featuring the DCFS Adoptions Information Line (1-888-811-1121) will be handed out to the community, County employees and featured on County vehicles.

The department will also continue its efforts to reach out to the faith-based community in November. Two DCFS faith-based adoption programs will launch during the month including “Church Families for Waiting Children,” which will enlist churches in helping find families for African-American children by featuring their photos in church bulletins and promoting and supporting adoptions in their church. In addition, the “Church Mentor Program” is designed to connect specific waiting children with church members who will involve them in their congregation and help them develop permanent connections.

Additional Los Angeles County Adoption Month activities include:

- A breakfast sponsored by Supervisor Antonovich on Thursday, November 3rd at The Arboretum in Pasadena, which will include faith-based leaders in the County’s Fifth District. Clergy will meet to discuss ways to recruit prospective adoptive families for waiting foster children.
- Actor Henry Winkler is one of the photographers featured in the Heart Gallery Los Angeles, which will kick-off on Saturday, November 5th, at the Highlands in Hollywood. This portable exhibit will feature fine art portraits of children awaiting adoption. Professional photographers donated their time to take the photographs. The exhibit will also be displayed at shopping malls in Los Angeles County to help raise adoption awareness and find families for the children featured.
- “Adoption Day” will be held on Saturday, November 19th at the Edmund D. Edelman Children’s Court in Monterey Park. Lawyers who donate their time and services to this event will finalize hundred of adoptions this day.
- A Latino Outreach Breakfast will be held in mid-November for leaders in the Latino community. The breakfast will engage them in helping find families for Latino children awaiting adoption.
- A variety of media will help promote adoption in November. Christine Devine, Fox 11 news anchor and host of “Wednesday’s Child,” is part of a special promotional push for National Adoption Month and the Heart Gallery. In addition, a major radio campaign with KLVE, the BEAT and KJLH will promote adoption awareness and help recruit families.

For more information about adopting through Los Angeles County, call 1-888-811-1221, or log on to the DCFS web site at <http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us> and click on to the Adoptions link at the top of the page.

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Superior Court of California County of Sacramento



Release date:
November 15, 2005

NEWS RELEASE

FROM: Honorable Michael G. Virga
Presiding Judge

CONTACT: Pam Reynolds
Public Information Officer
(916) 591-0050
reynolp@saccourt.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SACRAMENTO SUPERIOR COURT ADOPTION DAY - SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2005

The Sacramento Superior Court will celebrate National Adoption Day on Saturday, November 19, 2005. This special event will be held at the William R. Ridgeway Family Relations Courthouse located at 3341 Power Inn Road, Sacramento. Activities will begin at 9:00 am and conclude at 1:00 pm. Festivities include scheduled adoption proceedings, refreshments and activities for children including clowns, face painting, art, and much, much more.

Adoption Day for Sacramento County is a collaborative effort with agencies including the Sacramento Superior Court Judiciary and staff, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, Lilliput Children's Services, and Soroptimist International of Greater Sacramento.

We expect to have approximately 90 children adopted during this year's Adoption Day event. This effort focuses on informing the public about the adoption process, and raises awareness of the need for adoptive parents in our community. Some adoptive families in the past events have interviewed with the media to inform the public of this special cause.

The media is welcome to join us for this event and witness first-hand the volunteer efforts that aims at uniting children, whose lives have been difficult at best, with permanent families through adoption. This event is truly a cause for celebration. Please join us!

For more information on National Adoption Day, visit www.nationaladoptionday.org.



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Michael D. Planet
*Executive Officer/Clerk
And Jury Commissioner*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 2005

Contact: Cheryl Kanatzar
Court Senior Program Manager
(805) 981-5938

VENTURA SUPERIOR COURT CELEBRATES COURT ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY MONTH

The Ventura Superior Court will celebrate "Court Adoption and Permanency Month" during a special adoption calendar beginning at 1:30 p.m. today in Courtroom J1 at the Juvenile Courthouse in El Rio. Adoptions will be finalized for several children and Certificates of Family Membership will be presented. The Juvenile Courthouse is located at the Juvenile Justice Complex, 4333 Vineyard Avenue in El Rio. The event is open to the public.

On behalf of the Judicial Council of California, California Supreme Court Justice Ronald M. George proclaimed November as a month dedicated to further improving administration of justice for proceedings involving children and families.

To promote Court Adoption and Permanency Month, the Ventura Superior Court will place a stronger emphasis on permanency planning and adoptions throughout the month of November.

In addition to the special adoption calendar on November 4, an Adoption and Permanency Information Fair will be held at the Pacific View Mall in Ventura on November 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Members of the community are invited to attend and speak with representatives from organizations that provide services and support to foster and adoptive parents.

Each year in California, there are more than 490,000 reports of child abuse and neglect, approximately 27,000 children enter foster care, and almost 96,000 children are living apart from their families in out-of-home care. Thirty-four percent of the children in foster care in California have been away from their families in out-of-home care for four years or more, and of the more than 35,000 children existing in foster care between January and December 2004, 52 percent were reunited with their families and 20 percent were adopted.

Individuals interested in obtaining more information on adoptions should call the Human Services Agency at (805) 240-2759 and ask for the Adoptions Officer of the Day.

Juvenile Court Administrative Deskbook

(Chapter 9 from the deskbook)

A Media Relations Plan for the Juvenile Court

Courts serving children and families are facing increasing scrutiny by the press and public. News stories about sensational juvenile crimes have captured the nation's attention, elevating public criticism of the courts and general concern about juvenile crime.

To encourage public confidence in the juvenile court system, it is important that each presiding judge of a juvenile court have a well-formulated plan to develop or enhance relations with local media.

National studies show that a large segment of the public gets most of its information about the courts from the news media, so developing strategies for using the media to influence public opinion is a critical part of any community outreach effort. The media can be the court's ally in educating the public and increasing public awareness of the complexity of juvenile court cases.

PROACTIVE STRATEGIES

The historic role of the media is to investigate and report on government institutions. As newspapers, television, and radio have competed for readers and viewers, media commercialism has increased, and there has been a trend toward sensationalizing the news.

Proactive media strategies are more important than ever before because (1) some members of the press tend to always write stories that focus on unusual or controversial issues; (2) reporters typically have little time to investigate and write news stories; (3) confidentiality requirements limit the court's ability to tell all the details about pending cases; and (4) the crisis-driven nature of the court's day-to-day operations hampers its ability to communicate with the press. Following are some strategies to consider for your court.

Develop a Media Policy

The first step in creating a media plan for your court is to develop a media policy that is supported by the presiding judge. This policy can be only a few sentences, but it should include a clear statement about how the court will officially communicate with the press. Some examples follow:

1. "The Juvenile Court will answer all incoming press calls on a timely basis and will convey accurate information on court proceedings, within the rules of confidentiality that govern court proceedings."

2. “The presiding judge is the official spokesperson for the juvenile court” *or* “The presiding judge designates [name] to serve as the official spokesperson for the court.”
3. “The court may provide only the following information about court proceedings:” *(list whatever details can be provided without comprising confidentiality)*.
4. “The court will develop fact sheets for the media that will clearly explain the purpose, function, and history of the juvenile court and the proceedings that are under its jurisdiction. Confidentiality rules will be explained.”
5. “The court will provide orientation sessions for new reporters who cover the juvenile courts, to educate them on the juvenile court system.”

Create a Media Contact List

Develop an up-to-date media list for your area. Use the telephone book or the Internet to compile a list of reporters and media outlets that may be interested in covering stories involving children and families. Ask the public information officer of the Judicial Council if you need assistance in finding resource documents.

Be sure to include the legal affairs reporters of daily and weekly newspapers, including legal publications and ethnic, alternative, and community newspapers. For each entry, include the name, title, media outlet, address, phone number, fax number, and e-mail address. Since reporters’ beats regularly change, it is important for the court (the juvenile court presiding judge, the court executive, or another juvenile court judicial officer) to develop relationships with individual reporters and those on the assignment desk so that when changes in reporter staffing occur, you will know. Also include the news directors and reporters of local news radio stations and television stations. When creating the list, call media outlets directly and ask who covers legal affairs and who the feature writers on children and family issues are.

Designate Media Spokespersons

Courts have found that designating one or more media spokespersons can be very helpful in developing positive relationships with a wide range of media representatives. First, it ensures that the court maintains uniformity and accuracy in the information it provides to the press. Second, it allows reporters to deal with a media liaison who officially speaks for the court. Third, courts have found that such spokespersons can be very effective in managing the numerous calls from media that occur during high-profile cases and in providing accurate information to the media so that they can write balanced stories.

The media find it helpful, and the court’s management of media calls may benefit, if the court designates two or more spokespersons that will be called on to address particular subjects—for example, Court Appointed Special Advocates, court-appointed counsel, dependency mediation, Indian Child Welfare Act proceedings, and so forth.

Open the Courtroom

Although in California juvenile court proceedings are closed and confidential, there are still ways in which the court can open its doors to the media.¹

With the informed consent of the parties and carefully drafted orders on the preservation of confidentiality, some juvenile courts have opened their courtrooms in certain cases. By giving access to media, these juvenile courts have been rewarded with well-balanced stories on the work of juvenile courts and have forged personal relationships with reporters that can be used for future stories.

In addition, there are opportunities to involve the media with special events such as Court Adoption and Permanency Month, celebrated in November. Some courts have invited the media to attend their adoption calendars so that they can see first-hand the court's good work. For example, the juvenile court in El Dorado County opens its courtroom on the last Friday of every month, when it hears only adoptions. Children receive certificates of adoption, treats from court personnel and local businesses, and balloon animals made by the court commissioner. When the families give their permission, the local newspaper covers the event and sometimes profiles a new family in a story with photos.

Write Op-Ed Pieces and Commentary

As experts on juvenile law, you and others in the juvenile court system are in a unique position to submit op-ed pieces or other commentary to your local newspaper. This will help you establish a relationship with the newspaper's editorial board and will allow you to deliver your message in your own words and often on your own timeline.

Consider writing a regular educational column for your local newspaper. Call your local editor to discuss your ideas.

Give Interviews With Radio or Television

Local radio and television stations may be interested in interviewing juvenile court judges on general topics, if the court notifies them that judges are available for this. Remember to make it clear that, as a judge, you are not able to discuss the details of any pending juvenile court cases. Many reporters are not aware of the ethical constraints on judges in regard to commenting on cases.

Make Public Service Announcements

Another strategy for improving publicity about the juvenile court is to make public service announcements (PSAs). Ways to approach this include (1) finding a corporate sponsor—consider those that might need positive press in the wake of negative publicity; (2) piggybacking on events that are already in the public eye, such as Mother's Day and

¹ See Welf. and Inst. Code, §§ 346, 827.

Father's Day; and (3) making a PSA a news item—for example, obtaining a declaration from the board of supervisors and reading relevant portions of it in a PSA.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO REPORTERS

A reporter's first responsibility is to the public's right to know, but this is often in direct conflict with the court's requirement to maintain confidentiality in juvenile proceedings. There are still ways, however, that courts can be helpful to reporters as they prepare their stories. Here are some tips:

1. Be responsive by calling back reporters promptly, since they are often on tight daily deadlines.
2. Be clear whether you are talking on or off the record. If you are not sure of the reporter's knowledge of this distinction, tell him or her what you mean by talking "off the record," and ask the reporter if he or she understands.
3. Be succinct, and use language that your audience will understand.
4. Provide background information that is accurate and current.
5. Direct the reporter to other sources who can talk on the record, such as law school professors, attorneys, or bar association spokespersons.
6. When you cannot talk about a specific case because of confidentiality constraints, talk to the reporter about similar cases.
7. Describe relevant policies and procedures.
8. If the story is national or from another county, offer a local angle or perspective.
9. Be careful, though, when a reporter asks you to speculate. It's all right to answer "I don't know" and call the reporter back if you find the information and are able to share it with the reporter.

Developing Rapport

1. Notice bylines and initiate contact with reporters who have an interest in children and families and who appear to understand the complexity of the issues.
2. Call reporters to discuss their work.
3. Invite them to lunch to educate them on your work.
4. Invite them to system meetings to introduce them to participants and educate them on agenda topics.
5. Collaborate with court-connected service providers—such as mediators, court-appointed counsel, local bar associations, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and foster care associations—to develop ongoing relationships with the press.

6. Collaborate with executive branch agencies—such as social services and probation departments—to do the same.

CONCLUSION

The credibility and effectiveness of a juvenile court depends in large measure on public confidence. Inaccurate reporting or unjust criticism of judges, courts, or the juvenile court system by the news media erodes public confidence and can be easily prevented. With some time and attention to media outreach, even a closed, confidential system such as a juvenile court can influence public opinion and contribute to more accurate and fair reporting of the issues.

RESOURCES

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Web Sites

PINetwork-Media Relations

<http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/pin/media.htm>

This is the media relations site in the PINetwork, the knowledge and resource sharing tool for court staff maintained by the AOC's Office of Communications. It includes tips, communications plans, and related resources from court public information offices across the state as well as links to other sites, including that of the National Center for Courts and the Media.

California Courts' Online Press Center

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/presscenter

The site is designed to assist journalists in covering the courts by providing news and background materials about California's judicial branch. There are also links to other media-related Web sites, including those for the First Amendment Project's *Guide to the Courts and Court Records* and the Freedom Forum's Justice and Journalism Program.

Trust and Confidence in the California Courts

A Survey of the Public and Attorneys

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This report, *Part I: Findings and Recommendations*, written by Dr. Rottman, outlines the main findings and offers recommendations for policy and for further research.

Part II: Executive Summary of Methodology with Survey Instruments, produced by John Rogers and Diane Godard, presents an overview of the survey methodology, as well as the questions included in the public and attorney surveys.

Parts I and II can be downloaded at:
http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/4_37pubtrust.htm

This report was produced for the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts. For additional information, please contact:

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Why survey?

What the public thinks about California's courts matters. Respect for the law depends upon public confidence in the integrity of the justice system. Compliance with court orders is influenced by the sense of fairness people have about how courts render decisions. Whether disputes are brought to the courts for resolution or decided elsewhere depends in part on the perceived fairness and efficiency of the courts. Votes in referendums designed to improve court resources are swayed by perceptions of courts.

Perceptions of the courts are forged through a mixture of information, ranging from personal experience as a juror to the latest episode of *Law and Order*. Opinion surveys shed light on how those perceptions are formed and, to some degree, on how those opinions might be changed by policies that address the public's legitimate expectations of courts and expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of what courts do.

Opinion surveys describe patterns in how people use the courts that cannot be derived from court records and establish the perceived barriers and incentives that underlie such patterns. The same potential extends to the activities and concerns of key constituents of the courts, such as practicing attorneys.

In these and other ways, opinion surveys contribute to strategic planning efforts and complement the many other sources of research on the work and accomplishments of the state courts available to the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The last comprehensive statewide survey of opinion on the California courts was in 1992 (*Surveying the Future: Californians' Attitudes on the Court System*). The intervening years were momentous for the courts: trial courts were unified, funding shifted to the state, and initiatives like court and community collaboration made their mark. A new survey was overdue, one linked to the issues and concerns now before the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

How was the survey conducted?

Between November 2004 and February 2005 over 2,400 California adults were surveyed regarding their:

- knowledge about the courts and the sources of that knowledge
- perceived and experienced barriers to court access
- experiences as jurors, litigants, or consumers of court information
- expectations for what the courts should be doing
- sense of the accessibility, fairness, and efficiency of the courts

Particular care was taken to ensure that the perceptions and experiences of all Californians were given equal weight. Extra efforts were made to interview minority group members and non-English speakers and to capture the range of opinion across the state's geography.

At the same time, over 500 randomly selected practicing attorneys were interviewed for their views on topics covered in the public survey and on issues basic to their conduct of business with the state's trial and appellate courts.

The second part of this report, *Part II: Executive Summary of Methodology with Survey Instruments*, by John Rogers and Diane Godard presents an overview of the survey methodology, as well as the questions included in the two surveys.

What is in this report?

This report highlights findings from the public and attorney surveys and draws out implications for policymakers. Specific recommendations are offered at the end of each section of the report. The final section offers thoughts on how opinion surveys can best fit within the repertoire of information-gathering methods available to the Judicial Council.

Several questions from the survey relevant to an important aspect of public opinion, such as the fairness of court procedures, are combined into multi-item scales. Measurements based on scales are desirable because they rely less on the wording of a single question and can reflect the multiple aspects of concepts like "approval" or "fairness" (see scales in right column).

In addition to reporting standard percentages for individual questions and averages for scales, this report uses multivariate statistical techniques to look at the influence of several factors simultaneously on people's opinions. Multivariate analysis allows us to predict, for example, the influence of prior court experience on approval of the courts after taking into account (or "controlling for") other factors such as age, gender, educational credentials, income, or racial or ethnic group identity that might also influence an individual's view of California's courts. It is possible to measure how well the factors we selected can predict approval of the courts or any other criterion of interest (on a scale of zero to 100 percent). The list that follows shows the three categories of factors used in multivariate analysis.

1. What are we trying to explain?

- Overall approval of the California courts (four-item scale)
- Confidence in the California court system
- Confidence in the courts in your county
- Job performance of the California court system
- Job performance of the courts in your county

2. What are the main non-demographic influences on approval and confidence?

- Perceived fairness of court procedures (four-item scale)
- Perceived fairness of court outcomes
- Prior court experience
- Specific aspects of court performance (e.g., protects constitutional rights, reports to public)
- Perceived barriers to court access
- Sources of information about the courts
- Unmet expectations of the courts
- Confidence in other public institutions

3. What demographic factors are taken into consideration?

- Race and ethnicity, age, gender, education, income
- Urban or rural resident
- Political orientation
- Recent immigrants, primary language

Variables included in overall approval and procedural fairness scales

The questions used to measure overall approval and procedural fairness were derived from previous surveys of opinion about the state courts. The resulting multi-item scales meet the conventional standard for reliability, which provides assurance that the questions all measure aspects of the same phenomenon. The scales can range from a low of one to a high of four.

Overall approval:

1. In general, how would you rate your confidence in the California court system?
2. In general, how would you rate your confidence in the courts in your county? *very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, not at all confident*
3. Now overall, what is your opinion of the California court system? *excellent, very good, good, fair, poor*
4. Still thinking of just the courts in your county, what is your opinion of the overall job they are doing? *very good, good, fair, poor, very poor*

Procedural fairness:

Do you agree or disagree that the courts in your county:

1. Are unbiased in their case decisions?
2. Treat people with dignity and respect?
3. Listen carefully to what people have to say?
4. Take the needs of people into account? *strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree*

Overview of Public and Attorney Opinion: Then and Now

Recommendations

<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Confidence in the California courts is substantially higher now than when the last comparable statewide survey was conducted in 1992.■ The public and attorneys today are moderately positive about their courts. Attorneys tend to be the most positive.■ Local courts attract greater public confidence than the overall state court system.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Judicial Council and the State Bar should meet to reflect on the substantial proportion of practicing attorneys who disagree that judges follow the rules and juries represent communities.2. Communications from the Judicial Council and Administrative Office of the Courts should speak to the public about their local courts rather than the more abstract state court system.3. Given that uneasiness about going to court among the general population is linked to one's access to resources, immigration status, and other important indicators of life circumstance, the courts must move beyond addressing such unease simply as a public relations issue. Rather, community outreach efforts may have to be paired with the provision of court services that both inform and empower all	<p>members of the public to seek the courts' assistance when necessary.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. The Judicial Council should adopt a schedule of surveying the public at either five- or ten-year intervals.5. Surveys of the public gain value if comparable questions are asked of groups like attorneys who have a professional involvement with the courts.
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Receiving and Seeking Court Information

Recommendations

<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Self-rated familiarity with the California courts is low for the public, unchanged since 1992.■ Knowledge of the courts increases with exposure to court information in newspapers, the Internet, televised trials, and, most importantly, the court itself.■ Exposure to fictional representations of how the courts work is associated with lower self-ratings of familiarity with the courts by members of the public.■ Members of the public and attorneys accessing information from the courts via the Internet are very satisfied with the service.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Newspapers and the Internet are the most efficient ways to get the courts' message to the public.2. The courts should make use of ethnic media, print and electronic, in disseminating information about the courts to the public.3. Large-scale investment in the Internet's potential for the courts is warranted.4. The Judicial Council should identify and disseminate aggressively the essential information the public needs to protect their rights and use the courts appropriately.5. Programs that bring judges and court staff as educators into the classroom and before civic organizations should be expanded.6. Courts need to consider outreach efforts to make the less affluent, and less well educated aware of the kinds of information that can be obtained from courthouse personnel.7. Extra efforts are needed to understand why Asian-Americans and Latinos report contacting the courts for information less frequently than other groups.
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Experience in a Court Case: Incidence and Consequences	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The majority of Californians (56 percent) have been involved in a case that brought them to a courthouse, mainly through responding to a jury summons or serving as a juror. The incidence of court experience varies among racial and ethnic groups and increases markedly with level of education.■ Only service as a jury member increases average approval of the courts. Otherwise, court experience tends to be associated with a slightly lower level of approval.■ Defendants in traffic cases and litigants and attorneys in family or juvenile cases are less approving of the California courts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The jury is the prime audience for the state courts, and the best available mechanism for disseminating positive information on the courts by word of mouth. Specific policies and programs should be directed at maximizing this potential.2. A focus on the elements of procedural fairness, discussed later in the report, can take the benefits of staff education on customer service to a higher level.3. High-volume, low-stakes court dockets like traffic and small claims spread ill will for the courts and leave litigants dissatisfied with their day in court. In large and many medium-sized courts the way such cases are processed needs to be redesigned to incorporate procedural fairness criteria.4. The effectiveness of procedural-fairness-driven reforms should be monitored by "exit surveys" of court users to fine-tune the changes as they are introduced and periodically thereafter.5. Joint action by the Judicial Council and State Bar is needed to address as a matter of priority the reasons for the perceived unfairness in family and juvenile proceedings.6. The apparent underrepresentation of Asian-Americans and Latinos on juries needs to be examined to see if factors other than eligibility are active.

Barriers to Taking a Case to Court	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The cost of hiring an attorney, regardless of the respondent's income level, is the most commonly stated barrier to taking a case to court.■ Barriers include lack of childcare, distance to be traveled, time away from work, and unease about what might happen if one became involved in a court case.■ Recent immigrants appear to be poorly informed about formal alternatives to court as a way of resolving disputes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The State Bar and the Judicial Council should adopt parallel strategies to re-think the role of self-help centers and similar services in light of the widespread perception that attorney fees are a barrier to going to court.2. Awareness of alternatives to court adjudication needs to be made more widely known among immigrants and people with less than a college education.3. Court interpretation programs should recognize that many non-native English speakers who are comfortable using English in many settings may still feel the need for an interpreter in court.4. Establishing childcare facilities in courthouses is an important component of policies seeking greater access to the courts among the less affluent and, perhaps, especially recent immigrants.5. Providing remote locations at which basic court business can be conducted is one way to lower the barrier of geography for the less affluent, immigrants generally, and members of the public living in rural areas.

Diversity and the Needs of a Diverse Population

- The diversity of the public served by California's courts is striking: 31 percent of all respondents were born outside of the United States.
- Immigrants, especially recent immigrants, tend to hold highly positive views of the California courts but have low levels of contact with the courts.
- The positive opinions of immigrants do not appear to fade away, remaining overall strong after ten, twenty, or more years in the United States.
- Language difficulties appear to be more formidable in court than in other settings: immigrants resident in the United States for more than 10 years typically chose to be interviewed in English but many expressed concern that language would be a barrier to their taking a case to court.

Recommendations

1. The courts should be attentive to the distinctive needs of immigrant groups in accessing the courts, a need only partially met by addressing language issues.
2. Practical aspects of court operations, such as hours of operation and difficult-to-reach courthouses, need to be addressed to ensure access for recent immigrants, as well as others for whom these are barriers.
3. The availability and appropriate use of alternative methods of dispute resolution need to be made more widely known among immigrant populations.
4. The court-related opinions and experiences of the U.S.-born children of immigrants merit study to determine if they will continue their parents' positive views of the California courts.

Fairness in Procedures and Outcomes: The Core Concern

Recommendations

- Having a sense that court decisions are made through processes that are fair is the strongest predictor by far of whether members of the public approve of or have confidence in California courts.
 - Californians rate their courts highest on the "respect and dignity" element of procedural fairness and lowest on the "participation" ("listen carefully") element.
 - For attorneys, outcome fairness is more important than procedural fairness when predicting approval of the courts.
 - Litigants in family and juvenile cases and defendants in traffic cases perceive less procedural fairness than do litigants in other kinds of cases.
 - Attorneys practicing family law rate procedural fairness lower than do other attorneys.
 - Californians consider that outcome fairness is least for people with low incomes and non-English speakers.
 - African-Americans tend to perceive the highest level of outcome unfairness for Latino/Hispanic Americans, African-Americans, and low-income people. They are only slightly less likely than Latinos and more likely than Asian-Americans to perceive unfair outcomes for non-English speakers.
1. Judges and court staff should be educated in the criteria of procedural fairness.
 2. Education on procedural fairness is not enough. Initiatives are needed to ensure that all cases are processed in a manner consistent with a sense of fairness in court procedures.
 3. There is particular urgency in improving the processing of traffic and similar high-volume dockets in ways that meet the criteria of procedural fairness.
 4. There is equal or greater urgency to improving procedural fairness in family and juvenile cases, to improve

confidence in the process both for litigants and their attorneys. Court resources need to be reallocated to improve the way family and juvenile cases are handled.

5. High-volume, low-stakes cases need to be redesigned so that litigants are afforded an opportunity to express their point of view.

6. Programs that promote procedural fairness are also the ones that will reduce the gap separating approval of the California courts by African-Americans with that by other racial and ethnic groups.

Expectations and Performance

Recommendations

- Generally the public perceives a high level of job performance by the California courts.
 - Protecting constitutional rights, ensuring public safety, and concluding cases in a timely manner are among the responsibilities regarded as most important on which to spend resources.
 - Reporting regularly to the public on court job performance is viewed as important by a majority of the survey respondents. That responsibility also emerged as the greatest unmet expectation of the courts.
 - The greatest concerns were expressed about politics influencing court decisions, proceedings that cannot be understood, and uneasiness about becoming involved with the courts.
1. The public's greatest unmet expectation for the courts is that they report on their job performance. This suggests that Judicial Council and Administrative Office of the Courts establish initiatives to help trial courts measure their procedural fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness.
 2. Programs to promote timeliness in case dispositions continue to be relevant.

3. The hours of court operation should be reconsidered in light of the expectation that courts should be open at convenient hours and the barrier to the courts that current hours appear to represent.

4. The courts should give prominence to their successes in the civil justice arena.

Next Steps: Survey Findings as a Guide to Policy

- Policies that promote procedural fairness offer the vehicle with the greatest potential for changing how the public views the state courts.
- People who believe that the California court system protects constitutional rights and makes sure judges follow the rules are likely to rate procedural fairness high, as are those who feel that judges are honest and fair and that courts are in touch with the community.
- The fairness of procedures used for traffic and other high-volume, low-stakes court cases should be studied to understand what, specifically, contributes to the low sense of fairness they promote.

Data Needs: A Proposed Program of Research

- Some findings from the 2005 survey point to specific policy initiatives and actions that the Judicial Council might wish to pursue. Other findings are suggestive rather than directive, requiring clarification before the appropriate policy implications can be drawn.
- The Judicial Council should adopt a schedule of surveying the public at either five- or ten- year intervals. Such comprehensive surveys should be supplemented by placement of specific questions in ongoing surveys carried out by university survey centers and similar institutions. The questions should combine a few "tracking"

items from the 2005 survey to monitor trends annually or every 18 months with new questions relevant to emerging policy issues demanding the attention of the Judicial Council.

- The 2005 attorney and public surveys should be supplemented this year and next by a series of focus groups, directed at key findings that require further exploration before policies can be constructed. Focus groups can help define what the public has in mind in terms of 1) reporting on court performance and 2) what underlies the sense of unease the majority of the public has when contemplating going to court.

1. The Judicial Council should give renewed emphasis to programs of court and community collaboration.
2. Adhering to principles of procedural fairness is the best approach to reducing the reluctance the majority of people feel about going to court because of unease about what might happen to them.
3. The often negative view African-Americans have of the California courts needs to be addressed in cooperation with law schools and the Bar through community forums, outreach, and a commitment to diversity on the bench and among court staff.
4. The Judicial Council should make a concerted effort to explain to the public and opinion leaders the processes for ensuring that

Recommendations

- judges adhere to the rules.
5. The need for reporting regularly to the public on the job performance of the courts is clearly indicated by the survey results. Further research is needed to clarify what kinds of information in what formats will meet this expressed public expectation.

